

Instructions:

Cut out the following boxes and place them into an envelope (one per student).

1. Distribute the envelopes, a piece of chart paper, and a marker to the students, and have them place the boxes on a continuum from most acceptable to least acceptable.
2. Have each student “draw the line” between cultural practices that can be tolerated and those that are intolerable.
3. Invite each student to share their top 3 most acceptable and bottom 3 least acceptable cultural practices. Debrief as a class. Did the students use any criteria when making their decisions? Are there any disagreements?
4. Have the students compare their continuum to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, available at < <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>>. According to the UN, which of these cultural practices violate human rights? To what extent can human rights violations (if at all) be tolerated for the sake of cultural practices? What if people voluntarily waive their rights? Do the articles of the UDHR display only western values, or values that are (or should be) universal?

Human Rights vs. Culture Continuum

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| Religious Law A group of extremely religious people throw stones at homosexuals, as is demanded by their holy scriptures. | Cultural Coming-of-Age When a boy reaches the age of 16 he is circumcised in front of the entire tribe, without anaesthetics or antiseptics. If he flinches during the procedure, he is cast out of the tribe. |
| Marriage In accordance with custom, the parents of an 11-year old girl arrange for her to be married to a wealthy 58-year old businessman. | Law of the Land A convicted murderer is executed by public beheading, as is dictated by state law. |
| Cannibalism Members of a tribe living on a remote island continue a centuries-old practice in which convicted murderers are executed and eaten. | Schools A group of people are concerned about what their children are learning in schools and lobby the government to force teachers to include both scientific and traditional explanations of human existence. |
| Honouring the Gods In order to appease their deities, members of a certain religious sect perform human sacrifices in accordance with their centuries-old traditions. | Womanhood Members of a remote hill tribe elongate the necks of their girls by placing golden rings, often having severe medical repercussions. |
| Classroom Hours In certain countries where education is highly valued, students who are 12 years old and older spend 14 hours per day in class. | Sky Burial In accordance with tradition, human corpses are cut into small pieces and placed on a mountaintop where they are consumed by birds of prey, receiving a "burial in the sky." |
| Polygamy Male members of a certain group demand the right to marry as many women as they please. | Eunuchs In order to reach the top levels of government and/or military, a man must undergo castration (removal of the genitals). |
| Warfare Citizens of a city-state begin training for war at the age of 7. | Public Entertainment Citizens watch slaves, military prisoners, and condemned criminals fight each other (or vicious animals) to death in a large arena. |
| Foot Binding As part of a cultural tradition, many women are forced to have their feet broken and bound, often leaving them disabled. | Anonymity? People who have been charged with pedophilia are required to register their names in their community, often leading to backlashes against them. |
| Female Circumcision For cultural and/or religious practice, women under the age of majority have their external genitalia removed with the permission of their parents. | Gender Inequality The females of a modern, industrial country still lag behind men, taking in 70% of their salary for the same work, and having unequal representation in Parliament. |